

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1817

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 0456

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, ETRD, MY, VM, CB

SUBJECT: DEP. ASST. SECRETARY ROBERT OAKLEY'S DISCUSSIONS

WITH MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SECRETARY GENERAL

ZAKARIA: VIETNAM

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 0285

1. BEGIN SUMMARY.ON JAN 13 DEP. ASST. SECRETARY ROBERT OAKLEY, ACCOMPANIED BY THE AMBASSADOR, MET FOR ONE HOUR WITH MALAYSIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SECRETARY GENERAL DATUK ZAKARIA BIN HAJI MOHAMED ALI, AND DISCUSSED RELATIONS BETWEEN SRV AND ASEAN IN LIGHT OF THE RECENT VISIT OF SRV FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DUY TRINH. ZAKARIA OPINED THAT RECENT SRV DEMARCHES TO CONFIDENTIAL

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ALL ASEAN NATIONS EXCEPTING SINGAPORE ILLUSTRATE VIETNAMESE EAGERNESS TO ESTABLISH CLOSER TIES WITH ITS ASEAN NATIONS, IN PARTICULAR AS A RESULT OF CURRENT FIGHTING WITHCAMBODIA, BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF AN INCREASINGLY PRAGMATIC POLICY TOWARDS TRADE AND ECOMMIC COOPERATION. ZAKARIA REMARKED THAT THE VIETNAMESE ON THEIR VISIT HERE

SEEMED PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR BORDER DISPUTES WITH CAMBODIA, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THE TOP PRIORITY OF THEIR SUBSTANTIVE DISCUSSIONS WAS GREATER TRADE WITH MALAYSIA. ZAKARIA SAW A SIGNIFICANCE IN THE FACT THAT VIETNAMESE WERE UNWILLING TO ISSUE A JOINT COMMUNIQUE AT THE TIME OF THE MALAYSIAN VISIT TO HANOI IN MAY LAST YEAR, BUT WERE NOW MORE INSISTENT THAT THE MALAYSIANS THAT A COMMUNIQUE BE RELEASED HERE, EVEN TO THE POINT OF AGREEING TO THE MALAYSIAN DEMAND THAT "FREEDOM" APPEAR IN REMARKS ON SOUTHEAST ASIAN PEACE, FREEDOM, NEUTRALITY AND INDEPENDENCE. ZAKARIA REFUSED TO EXPRESS HIS OPINION ON WHICH PARTY WAS THE AGRESSOR IN THE CURRENT FIGHTING, BUT REMARKED THAT A HANOI CAPTURE OF PHNOM PENH WOULD CERTAINLY INJECT FEAR INTO THE MINDS OF SOUTHEAST ASIANS. HE WONDERED ALOUD IF VIETNAMESE REMARKS ON INDOCHINESE "FRATERNITY" MAY BE IN PREPARATION FOR A MOVE TO CONTROL CAMBODIA AND LAOS, AND QUESTIONED WHETHER THE PRC CAN STILL ACT AS A STABILIZING FORCE IN THE REGION IN VIEW OF ITS SILENCE ON THE FIGHTING. END SUMMARY.

2. ZAKARIA ASKED OAKLEY WHETHER SRV/CAMBODIAN BORDER CLASHES HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT THE RECENT CONFIDENTIAL

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CHIEFS OF MISSION CONFERENCE IN HONG KONG, AND OAKLEY RESPONDED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SOME TALK OF IT, BUT THAT IT WAS GENERALLY AGREED IT WAS

TOO EARLY TO COME TO DEFINITIVE CONCLUSIONS ABOUT MOTIVATIONS AND INTENTIONS OF EITHER PARTY. OAKLEY SUGGESTED THAT THE QUESTION NOW IS VIETNAM'S ULTIMATE OBJECTIVE IN SETTING UP LOCAL ADMINISTRATION IN BORDER AREAS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF ITS REMARKS ON "FRATERNITY" WITH INDOCHINA. AN EQUILIBRIUM IN THE AREA HAS EXISTED SINCE 1975, AND NOW THERE MAY BE CAUSE FOR APPREHENSION ON THE PART OF THAILAND AND OTHER NEIGHBORS. OAKLEY THEN ASKED ZAKARIA HOW HE SEES THE SITUATION, AND HOW HE FEELS THE PRC IS LIKELY TO REACT.

3. ZAKARIA WAS RELUCTANT TO TAKE SIDES IN THE MATTER, BUT REFERRED TO THE POSSIBLE SPECTER OF VIETNAMESE HEGEMONY IN INDOCHINA AS CONSISTENT WITH SRV VIEWS ON COMPLETE REVOLUTION IN THE AREA. HE ADDED THAT THERE WOULD NOT BE MUCH

QUALITATIVE CHANGE IF SRV TAKES OVER CAMBODIA.

4. OAKLEY AND ZAKARIA SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ON POSSIBLE VIETNAMESE POLICIES TOWARDS INDO-CHINA AND ASEAN. ZAKARIA FELT THAT IN RECENT DISCUSSIONS WITH SRV FOREIGN MINISTER NGUYEN DUY TRINH IN KUALA LUMPUR, THE VIETNAMESE EVINced A MORE PRAGMATIC POLICY TOWARDS ASEAN, ESPECIALLY IN ECONOMIC TERMS. OAKLEY REMARKED THAT IN DISCUSSIONS ON NORMALIZATION WITH SRV IN PARIS, THE VIETNAMESE APPEARED TO BE SOMEWHAT MORE FLEXIBLE ON THE SUBJECT OF AID, GIVING THE STRONG IMPRESSION THEY ARE ANXIOUS FOR SOME TYPE OF SUBSTANTIAL TRADE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.
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5. ZAKARIA ADDED THAT, ALTHOUGH THE POLITICAL ANGLE WAS NEVER FULLY DIVOCED FROM THEIR DISCUSSIONS, THE VIETNAMESE WERE NOW EAGER FOR A JOINT COMMUNIQUE, UNLIKE DURING THE EARLIER MALAYSIAN VISIT TO HANOI. IN THIS REGARD THE MALAYSIANS WERE ABLE TO INSIST ON THE INCLUSION OF THE TERM "FREEDOM" WITHIN THE COMMUNIQUE'S REFERENCES TO THE SOUTHEAST ASIAN ZONE OF

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 KUALA LUMPUR 0456

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

INDEPENDENCE, PEACE, FREEDOM AND NEUTRALITY, AN
INCLUSION THE VIETNAMESE HERETOFORE HAD STUDIOUSLY
AVOIDED.

6. OAKLEY AGAIN REFERRED TO PRC REACTION AND
ITS APPARENT SILENCE IN THE MATTER, ASKING
WHETHER MALAYSIA HAS FURTHER INTELLIGENCE ON
THE MATTER. ZAKARIA RESPONDED NEGATIVELY, BUT
REMARKED THAT MALAYSIA HAS "COUNTED ON" PRC TO
MAINTAIN EQUILIBRIUM IN THE AREA.

7. ZAKARIA IMPLIED THAT MALAYSIA IS WATCHING
DEVELOPMENTS IN INDOCHINA WITH SOME, BUT PERHAPS
NOT INORDINATE, CONCERN. HE TALKED WITH CONFIDENCE
ABOUT ASEAN'S GREATER STATURE, AND SEEMED QUITE
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SATISFIED THAT RECENT HIGH-LEVEL CONTACTS WITH
BOTH VIETNAM AND CAMBODIA HAVE FURTHERED MALAYSIA'S
RELATIONS WITH THESE TWO NATIONS. (IT IS OUR
IMPRESSION THAT THE GOM'S GREATER SELF-ASSURANCE
OF LATE MAY STEM IN PART FROM THE FACT THAT THE
TWO INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES APPEAR TO BE WOOLING
MALAYSIA, ALBEIT IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR MUTUAL
RIVALRY.) AT THE SAME TIME, ZAKARIA EXPRESSED
CONCERN THAT A CHANGE IN EQUILIBRIUM IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA COULD HAVE AN UNPREDICATABLE IMPACT ON THE
ASEAN NATIONS.
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